

FACT SHEET: Parenting/Home Visiting

REQUEST: Increase the number of County Pre-Natal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs (HVPs).

REQUEST: Support efforts to improve outcomes and increase use of evidence-based models in County-funded parenting programs.

Definitions

- **Home Visitation:** Professionals or paraprofessionals visit households to work on such issues as improving parenting skills, reducing risk for child abuse and neglect, promoting prenatal and early childhood health, and preparing children to succeed in school.
- **Evidence-Based Models:** Models that have been validated by repeated, rigorous, controlled studies of long term outcomes, and have been successfully replicated when brought to scale in a variety of venues.

History

- 2005 WCA published *No Time to Lose: Rethinking Mental Health Services for Westchester's Children* examining the mental health needs of young children.
- Focus on the emotional and social development of young children led to questions of available parenting programs in the county.
- 2007 WCA surveyed county parenting support and education programs for parents of young children 0 to 6 years of age.
- Parenting programs in the county run the gamut from informal parent gatherings in church basements to DSS subcontracted parenting classes.
- February 2009 report *The Toughest Job: Improving Parenting Programs for Westchester Families in Need* focuses on publicly funded parenting programs that serve families in the child welfare system.
- DSS has three parenting program contracts and 10 others where parenting is secondary to another service.
- *Campaign for Kids Fall 2009 Advocacy Survey* ranked mental health needs of children and families and parenting skills and parenting supports in the Top 3 of priority issues.

Potential Outcomes

- Significant gains in parent-child attachment; access to preventive medical care, parental capacity and function, and early identification of developmental delays, and better school readiness.

Cost Effectiveness and Savings

- Reducing future costs in Medicaid and other entitlements, including child welfare.
- Participants demonstrate higher monthly household earnings.
- Reduced need for special education services.
- Reduced need for juvenile justice programs.

Future Directions

- Develop criteria for families to become potential participants in HVPs.
- Determine which of the approved HVPs should be pursued.
- Educate the public and policy-makers.
- Seek and secure funding for implementation of HVPs in Westchester.